APPENDIX

12. (Original) A method of marking a text document [100] through the insertion of inter-word blank characters, said method comprising the steps of:

editing [110] the number of said inter-word blank characters of said text document in order to conform to a model to obtain a canonical text document [120]

retaining, from said canonical text document, to further conform to said model, a subset of positions [230] of said inter-word blank characters, said subset of positions permitting insertion of blank characters;

computing, using said canonical text document [120] and a secret-key as inputs [130], a unique combination of positions among said subset of positions;

inserting into each position [151] of said unique combination of positions at least one extra blank character thus obtaining a marked text document [150].

13. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein said text document [100] is said marked text document [150] to be authenticated by a recipient sharing said secret-key [130], said method further comprising the step of:

comparing [160] said text document [100] to said marked text document ; ~~[,]~~
if matching exactly [161] :
accepting said received text document as authentic;
if not [162] :
rejecting said received text document as fake.

14. (Currently Amended) A method of marking a text document through the insertion of inter-word blank characters, said method comprising the steps of:

editing the number of said inter-word blank characters of said text document in order to conform to a model to obtain a canonical text document;

~~The method according to claim 2~~ wherein said model involves stripping all inter-word blank characters ~~[110]~~, in excess of one, off said text document, said text document, said model further retaining all said positions of said inter-word b blank characters in said subset of positions ;

retaining, from said canonical text document, to further conform to said model, a subset of positions of said inter-word blank characters, said subset of positions permitting insertion of blank characters;
computing, using said canonical text document and a secret-key as inputs, a unique combination of positions among said subset of positions;
inserting into each position of said unique combination of positions at least one extra blank character thus obtaining a marked text document;
wherein said text document is said marked text document to be authenticated by a recipient sharing said secret-key, said method further comprising the step of:

comparing [160] said text document [100] to said marked text document ; ~~[,]~~
if matching exactly [161] :
accepting said received text document as authentic;
if not [162] :
rejecting said received text document as fake.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim ~~3~~ 14 wherein said model calls for the insertion, into a soft-copy text document, of three blank characters ~~[240]~~ at each end-of-line.

16. (CurrentlyAmended) The method according to Claim ~~4~~ 15 wherein said model calls for excluding end-of-line blank characters ~~[240]~~ from said subset of positions.

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim ~~5~~ 16 wherein the number of inserted blanks to mark a said text document is set to reach a probability equal to or less than a predefined value of obtaining an identical said marked text document purely by chance.

18. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~1~~ 14wherein the step of computing a unique combination of positions further includes the steps of: calculating a digest ~~[342]~~ uniquely representing said secret-key ~~[330]~~ combined with said canonical text ~~[320];~~

deriving from said digest a plurality of randomly distributed numbers ~~[346]~~ fitting in said subset of positions.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~7~~ 18 wherein the step of calculating a digest is replaced by the step of: applying a hashing function ~~[420]~~ over said secret-key ~~[415]~~ concatenated with said canonical text ~~[410]~~ thus obtaining a fixed-size keyed digest ~~[430].~~

20. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~8~~ 19 wherein the step of deriving a plurality of randomly distributed numbers further includes the steps of: indexing said subset of positions ~~[530];~~ using said digest as a seed ~~[510];~~ of a PRN (pseudo-random-number) generator; operating said PRN generator; said step of operating said PRN generator further including the steps of: retaining those of said numbers that fit said indexing ~~[540]~~ ; excluding duplicated said numbers ~~[545]~~; continuing to operate said PRN generator till enough valid numbers are withdrawn ~~[525]~~ to match the number of blanks to be inserted.

21. (Currently Amended) An authentication system, suitable for authenticating a text document, comprising means adapted for carrying out the method defined in Claim ~~1~~ 14.

22. (Currently Amended) A computer-like readable medium comprising instructions for carrying out the method defined in Claim ~~9~~ 20.